

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

in response to a client requesting help, displaying a menu including

three levels of interaction:

self-help searching in a database of information;

asynchronous help, requesting help and receiving a reply; and

synchronous help, interaction with an advisor;

if the client selects synchronous help,

alerting the advisor;

displaying a list of previously visited sites by the client to the advisor;

and

synchronizing display between the client and the advisor, such that the

advisor sees an identical display to the client.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the identical display

is displayed at a same rate for the advisor as for the client.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the advisor further

has an additional display permitting search of a database of information to

help the client.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the advisor posts

sticky notes on a web site discussed with the client.

1 5. The method according to claim 4, wherein the sticky notes may
2 include text, hyper-linked references, video, audio, or other information.

1 6. The method according to claim 4, wherein the sticky notes
2 remain associated with the web site discussed with the client, and the client
3 may go back to the web site and review the sticky notes.

1 7. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of
2 creating a reviewable discussion trail based on the client's discussion with the
3 advisor.

1 8. The method according to claim 7, wherein the discussion trail is
2 stored on a server, and may be reviewed by the client at any time.

1 9. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of
2 adding a help information generated by the advisor to the database of
3 information accessible to clients.

1 10. The method according to claim 1, wherein if the client selects
2 asynchronous help, the method further comprising the steps of:
3 prompting the client to enter a help question;
4 forwarding the help question to the advisor;
5 waiting for the advisor to generate an answer the help question; and
6 returning the answer to the client.

1 11. The method according to claim 10, wherein the answer returned
2 to the client comprises a web page hyperlink.

1 12. The method according to claim 11, wherein the answer further
2 includes a sticky note with hints.

1 13. The method according to claim 12, wherein the hints may
2 include one or more of the following: a video of the advisor explaining the
3 answer, a text message, an audio recording of the hints, or visual images.

1 14. A method of providing help through a client-server system
2 comprising the steps of:
3 a server receiving a help request from a client on a client system that is
4 linked to the server;
5 classifying the help request as a synchronous request or an
6 asynchronous request;
7 alerting a advisor if the help request is the synchronous request, the
8 advisor conversing with the client over the link to deduce a problem and a
9 solution;
10 generating an answer to the problem including a hyper-linked web
11 page and a sticky note for the client; and
12 associating the answer with the client, such that the client can retrieve
13 the answer multiple times, including the hyper-linked web page and the
14 sticky note.

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1 15. A method of providing help through a client-server system
2 comprising the steps of:
3 dynamically injecting a help button into web pages displayed to a client
4 system;
5 permitting the client system to request help from a first web page by
6 pushing the help button; and
7 providing a persistent answer to the client system that becomes
8 associated with the first web page, and is displayed whenever the client
9 system accesses the first web page.

1 16. The method of claim 15, wherein the persistent answer is stored
2 on the server system.

1 17. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
2 establishing a synchronous collaboration between a customer on the
3 client system and an advisor, the synchronous collaboration providing a
4 synchronous display and permitting the advisor to pilot a browser of the
5 customer

1 18. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
2 searching a predictive answer system for a response to the help request,
3 wherein the predictive answer system uses pattern matching with a database
4 to determine whether the response is applicable.

1 19. The method of claim 18, wherein the pattern includes customer
2 profile and context information.

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- 1 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the context information
- 2 comprises previous web page locations visited by the customer and actions on
- 3 the previous web page locations.

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